

*Legislation will cover patient education on cancer treatment under Medicare*

Huntington, NY— Today, Congressman Steve Israel (D-Huntington) joined nurse oncologists and cancer survivors to announce “The Improving Cancer Treatment Education Act of 2012” to provide registered nurses with Medicare reimbursement for the time they spend educating patients diagnosed with cancer, and their caregivers, about their treatment plans. While most oncology practices provide these services, they are currently not covered under Medicare, despite the fact that more than half of all cancer diagnoses occur among people aged 65 or older.

Rep. Steve Israel said, “Cancer treatment involves a team of doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals. Having a nurse explain treatment plans and provide resources to cancer patients between the time they are diagnosed and when they begin treatment can significantly improve their health and well being. My legislation will help oncology nurses arm Medicare recipients fighting cancer with all the information and resources they need to combat this disease and navigate their treatment.”

Rep. Israel was also joined by Colleen O’Brien, RN, CBCN, CBPN-IC and president of the Long Island/Queens Chapter of the Oncology Nursing Society, who expressed support for his legislation.

“The education that is provided to the cancer patient from the oncology nurse has proven to have positive long-term outcomes,” said Ms. O’Brien. “This bill recognizes a patient’s right to have this education provided to her and validates the important role of the oncology nurse in providing this information.”

Cancer Survivor Kristin Smart shared her story of beating breast cancer and how critical the information and guidance of her oncology nurses were in that battle.

“As a cancer survivor, I can tell you firsthand how essential it was to have oncology nurses providing me with education and resources during the period between my diagnosis and treatment,” said Ms. Smart. “I thank Congressman Israel for his support of this legislation that

will ensure that other patients are provided with the same resources as I had.”

“The Improving Cancer Treatment Education Act of 2012” will allow Medicare reimbursement for the time registered nurses take to educate people diagnosed with cancer, and their caregivers, about their treatment plans. This legislation also calls for the National Institutes of Health to continue supporting research in the area of symptom management and the role that nurses play in providing those interventions. Although today’s cancer research produces new insights into the causes of and cures for cancer, efforts to manage the symptoms and side effects that often accompany the disease and its treatments have not kept pace. Side effects of cancer and treatment can have a serious adverse impact on patients’ health, well-being, and quality of life.

Rep. Israel, a co-chair of the House Cancer Caucus, has long been a leader on this issue. This past month, he introduced a resolution recognizing the 40th anniversary of the National Cancer Act of 1971 and the more than 12,000,000 survivors of cancer alive today because of the commitment of the U.S. to research and advances in cancer prevention, detection, diagnosis, and treatment.

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